

When West Had a Man in Kremlin

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A Red War Hero Prepared U.S. For Its Confrontation With Mr. K on Cuban Missiles

By Frank Gibney

ON APRIL 12, 1961, at an unobtrusive meeting in Moscow, a high Russian official quietly handed a double-wrapped, double-sealed envelope to an English acquaintance. He asked that it be given to "interested parties" in the West.

Later that same month, the Russian said, he would himself be in London. He wanted to talk to people in the West—"to tell them what conditions in the Soviet Union are really like." The time was short, he said, and it was a critical time.

With this action, Col. Oleg Penkovsky, Russian war hero, senior officer in Soviet military intelligence, graduate of the Staff College and the Missile Academy, friend and confidant of Soviet marshals and generals, began his secret career as a volunteer spy for the West.

A Scientific Cover

GREVILLE WYNNE, the British businessman to whom Penkovsky entrusted his message, knew Penkovsky only in his capacity as an official of the Soviet State Committee for Coordination of Scientific Research, the huge subministry in charge of all Soviet business and technical exchanges with foreigners. He had then little idea of Penkovsky's true function and the importance of his action to the West.

Penkovsky's work as deputy chief of the committee's foreign department was merely a cover for his function as a General Staff intelligence officer. And as a former aide and confidant of the chief marshal of Soviet tactical missile forces, Marshal Sergei Varentsov, Penkovsky was privy to the most intimate details of high Russian military and political planning.

For the next 16 months, Penkovsky conducted the most daring and handsomely paid campaign of espionage in modern history. He rocked Nikita Khrush-

chev's policy to its foundations. For 1961 and 1962, the two years in which Penkovsky worked for British and American intelligence, marked the freezing point of the Cold War.

In June, 1961, Khrushchev risked war with his decision to force an Allied retreat in Berlin. In August, he put up the Berlin Wall. In September, 1961, he resumed nuclear testing, breaking agreements with the United States. His missile buildup of 1962 was climaxed in the Cuban confrontation with the United States, when Khrushchev almost threw the world into total war.

Throughout this time, Penkovsky furnished the West with high-priority information on Soviet missile strength, Soviet nuclear capabilities and the Soviet plans for a localized shooting war in Germany. Ultimately, he was a key factor in our ability to identify so swiftly the configurations of Soviet missile installations on Cuban soil. He also prepared American intelligence for Khrushchev's decision to use them.

Three London Visits

THREE TIMES Penkovsky made his way to London and Paris, ironically using his confidential Soviet intelligence assignments as a cover for his real espionage work with American and British officers. Three times he went back to Moscow to get further information for the West. In October, 1962, he was finally detected and arrested by the Soviet secret police, the State Security.

How badly he hurt Moscow's plans for an aggressive breakthrough against the West in those two critical years can be gathered from the public aftermath of his arrest: one chief marshal of the Soviet Union demoted and disgraced; the chief of Soviet military intelligence, Gen. Ivan Serov (the "Hangman of Hungary" in 1956) demoted; some 300 Soviet intelligence officers recalled to

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Moscow from their foreign posts.

Penkovsky had exposed them all. Soviet military intelligence has not yet recovered from the blow.

The recapitulation of matters covered in Penkovsky's Soviet indictment suggests the extent of his intelligence achievement: "Top secret information . . . documents of great value . . . of an economic, political and military nature . . . Soviet space secrets . . .

material on Soviet troops in the German Democratic Republic . . . new Soviet war material . . . command personnel of the antiaircraft defenses . . . (material on) atomic energy, rocket technology and the exploration of outer space . . ."

The trial of Col. Penkovsky and his British contact, Greville Wynne, began in Moscow May 7, 1963, and lasted four days. It was carefully organized by the Soviet authorities.

Penkovsky and Wynne had been under interrogation in Lubyanka Prison for six months preceding it. Both prisoners admitted their "guilt." Penkovsky apparently did so in an effort to secure decent treatment for his family.

Wynne was sentenced to a long prison term but was released in 1964 in exchange for the Soviet spy Konon Molody, who had been arrested by the British under the name of Gordon Lonsdale. Penkovsky was sentenced to death. Soviet authorities said he was shot May 16, 1963.

Until now, Penkovsky's remarkable feat was a secret, locked in the intelligence files of three countries. The Penkovsky Papers, excerpts of which begin here today, were smuggled out to the West two years ago and translated by Peter Deriabin, himself an escaped Soviet State Security officer.

The Papers have never before appeared anywhere. They will be published in book form by Doubleday Nov. 19.

The Penkovsky Papers comprise a strange, arresting document—partly a day by day account of Penkovsky's personal struggle against the Soviet regime; partly a running fever chart of Khrushchev's drive for aggression in Berlin and Cuba. They were written in Berlin and Cuba. They were written at great personal risk while Penkovsky was living his double life as a secret agent for the West.

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content merely with transmitting his intelligence reports. Col. Penkovsky was a single-minded zealot who hated the Khrushchev regime because he feared that Khrushchev was leading the world into a nuclear war. He wanted ordinary people in the West, not just intelligence officers, to hear his story and his reasons for breaking with a lifetime of service to the Soviet regime.

In a real sense of the word, for the brief 16 months in which he worked, Oleg Penkovsky was our man in the Kremlin. Without his guidance and information, Washington could not have acted in either Berlin or Cuba with the sureness it did.

Only by reading Penkovsky can Americans finally understand the pressures and tensions that were driving the Soviet leadership to risk war in 1961 and 1962, two years when the Cold War almost became hot.



This military pass gave Col. Penkovsky privileged access to General Staff headquarters and the Defense Ministry.

OCT 31 1965

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